

BCW  
1957  
10/22/57

YANQUI NO!  
CASTRO NO!  
CUBA SI!

---

by a Cuban socialist--Sergio Junco

Young Peoples Socialist League

111

YOUNG PEOPLES SOCIALIST LEAGUE

Yaqui, No!

Castro, No!

Cuba, Si!

---

Sergio Junco, assisted by  
Nick Howard

National Education Committee  
Second in a Series  
May 1, 1962

yanqui no!

castro no!

cuba si!

A great deal of debate has been taking place concerning the nature and development of present Cuban society; not surprisingly, a number of half-truths have been used by both the capitalist attackers of Castro and by the defenders of the Cuban regime, particularly those defenders of the regime who are followers of the Russian bureaucratic line. One of the best known polemics concerning Cuba is the one centered on Theodore Draper's article "Castro's Cuba", which appeared in the March 1961 edition of the British magazine Encounter /and as a supplement to the New Leader of March 27, 1961, here in the U.S. --ed./ . Draper put great emphasis on the fact that the revolution against Batista was originally a "bourgeois" revolution and that Castro "betrayed" such a movement. We hear from the pro-Castro side completely opposite arguments; eg, Paul Sweezy, editor of Monthly Review, affirms that this revolution was actually realized by the landless agricultural proletariat rather than the Cuban bourgeoisie. The truth is that these authors, lacking a careful chronological knowledge of the development of the Cuban revolution, are not able to determine the nature of this movement since its beginning.

Just after Batista took power in 1952, most of the Cuban bourgeoisie, which was much more important than many people tend to think, expected that Batista would arrive at some kind of political compromise and re-establish Cuba's constitutional government which had a "tradition" of twelve years in the country. Only the student community, with a few adherents from other sections of Cuban society, envisaged the possibility and desirability of violent action against the de facto government in order to re-establish the 1940 Constitution, which may be considered to be relatively advanced, especially if we take into account that it was established in a non-revolutionary manner.

Perhaps the best example of the attitude of the Cuban bourgeoisie is shown in the role of the Sociedad de Amigos de la Republica (SAR--Society of the Friends of the Republic), led by the late Colonel Cosme de la Torriente, a veteran of the War of Independence, and José Miró Cardona, former head of the National Association of Cuban Lawyers, as the political body comprising all of those groups which thought that a peaceful solution of the "Cuban situation" was possible. The 26th of July Movement founded in Mexico in 1955 refused to co-sponsor most of the purely conciliatory activities of the SAR. The Cuban Communist Party (PS) was not invited to join the organization, although the Communists at that time maintained a position which was close to the SAR than to the 26th of July Movement. Only the brutality of Batista's armed forces drove the SAR, and most of the Cuban bourgeoisie with it, into the camp of Castro's movement.

At the same time, Castro actually abandoned most of his radical social and economic proposals as they had been expressed in 1953 in the now famous speech History Will Absolve Me; for instance, in an interview given in the Sierra Maestra to Coronet (February 1958), Castro explicitly eliminated nationalization of foreign and Cuban firms as being an undesirable measure for the growth of the economy of the country. This softening of Castro's social and economic radicalism, but without any softening of his anti-Batista radicalism, made possible the political wedding of the more orthodox bourgeois community and the highly unorthodox student and intellectual community which had always given strong support to Castro and his movement and to the smaller but militant Revolutionary Directorate.

Just after the political wedding Castro came into contact with a limited section of the Cuban peasantry (only 60,000 lived in the Sierra; a good part of them being sharecroppers and yeoman farmers and not agricultural proletarians as Paul Sweezy would have it). There are extensive sugar lands not far from the Sierra Maestra, but there are also a great number of peasants working in relatively small coffee plantations at lumbering for the Cuban wood industry (lumber tycoon Babun was very much hurt by the fighting in the Sierra Maestra). It is true that the help of the peasants slightly increased the declining social and economic radicalism of the 26th July Movement in the mountains, but it is none the less true that when Dr. Humberto Sori Marin (who has already been executed), as Castro's Attorney General in the Sierra Maestra, drafted the first Agrarian Reform project on October 10th 1958, the new law was written in such mild and ambiguous terms that it was entirely acceptable to the Cuban bourgeoisie and even to the Chicago Tribune's correspondent Jules Dubois; and this happened less than three months before the overthrow of Batista's government. By this time, Castro's movement enjoyed the universal sympathy and passive support of practically all the Cuban people due to the brutality of Batista's thugs. The Rebel Army had, in December 1958, close to 8000 peasants in its ranks (almost exclusively from Oriente province) and was led mostly by student officers and a handful of peasant leaders like Crescencio Perez, who is now a political nonentity in Cuba. In the cities the movement was much more middle-class although at this stage there were numbers of the more active workers in its ranks.

Although this description would seem to justify, at least partially, Draper's later claim that Castro's "betrayed" the bourgeoisie, the writers do not think so at all. Castro created a revolution from above and "betrayed" nobody since there never existed a real mass movement of any particular class actively struggling for its own interests. There was both passive support and passive submission to Castro on the part of all the classes of the population always with the hope that the leader was actually on their side of the fence. Theodore Draper seems to think that a revolution is a contract signed between a leader and a certain social class, specifically a minority class like the bourgeoisie, and that the revolution can never change or modify itself in the process of struggle. Draper's point of view is in reality an undemocratic and manipulated one maintained by the pro-Russian and other apologists of the

present Castro regime. He affirms the right of a minority class, the Cuban bourgeoisie, to control the destinies of the Cuban people while the others affirm the right of a self-appointed elite to create and perpetuate a totalitarian state in Cuba. The most democratic and revolutionary process would have been for the 26th of July Movement to have tried to initiate and help to maintain a true mass party of the revolution consisting of peasants, workers, and students in order to strive, for example, for the establishment of a democratic socialist society in Cuba. What happened in reality was that the 26th of July disappeared as a living political organization and the PSP was left as the only organized force on the Cuban political scene. Both Draper and the Castroites implicitly maintain that an elite, and not the majority of the people, have the right to decide what kind of a society there should be in Cuba, the difference being that Draper wants Castro to keep his word and have a society based on bourgeois privilege in Cuba while the present Castroites do not want Castro to keep his word, and that instead he should create a bureaucratic collectivist society there. In any case, the people do not have a chance to mould and change the revolutionary process in whatever fashion they desire. Socialists maintain that regardless of what Castro might have promised to the bourgeoisie or the PSP, the people have a right to convert a bourgeois revolution, after the overthrow of Batista and his army, into a socialist or any other revolution which will fight for their social, economic and political rights at the same time. Whether that attempt would have completely succeeded, given the present state of the world, is a matter which deserves serious thought but which is not relevant to the matter being discussed here, that is, whether the majority of the people can "betray" an elite, a leader, or a minority class like the bourgeoisie, or whether a small revolutionary elite can "betray" any class which it never really represented.

What we have said so far is of the utmost importance in providing an answer to one of the most basic questions in the analysis of a society: "Who owns and controls the Cuban state?" The numerous apologists for Castro talk about a "peasants' state", a "peasants' and workers' state", and even a "degenerated workers' state". Three main arguments are given in order to make it appear that Castro's Cuba is a socialist, popular state. First, they say, Castro goes to the people whenever a decision has to be made.

condly, the people are armed. To the first argument we may easily answer that Castro goes to a certain part of the people after some decisions are made. A half-million people in a public square is just 20 per cent of the adult population of Cuba and even within these meetings nobody is allowed to present a point of view opposite or merely slightly different from that of Castro and his associates. Therefore it is entirely foolish to present this as an example of "a higher form of democracy." If this were so, then Mussolini and Co. would have to be counted as "higher democrats." To the second argument it should be answered that not a single militia unit has ever met in Cuba to consider questions of important "public policy", unless we are willing to describe as "important public policy" whether the militia should drill in the mornings rather than in the afternoons. The militias, at the beginning, were purely voluntary organizations, but this now belongs to the past. Countless factory workers have been coerced to join militia units lest they lose their jobs or cannot acquire a new one. Militia units are now increasingly being organized on a purely geographical basis instead of at the place of work, so they will be completely detached from the labour unions, some of which used to have a tradition of deliberation and decision making. The third argument rests on the supposed nationalization of industry and agriculture under workers' control. Nationalization has in fact been carried out, but workers' control is a joke.

The administrators of the Revolution claim that in fact workers' control does exist and it must be reported that many Cuban factory workers in the flush of revolutionary zeal consequent upon their recent release from a system of capitalist boss domination, insecurity and capitalist thuggery, also think the same. They are assisted in this view by a political propaganda machine that educates them to believe theirs to be a workers' government administering their factories. For more direct evidence they refer to the recently created Factory Reclamation Commissions. The workers have the right to elect seven delegates to these commissions but from these seven the Ministry of Labour has the final choice of three, two to represent the workers and one to represent the Ministry. This last delegate, significantly enough, also represents the workers' union. In addition the management of the factory also has two delegates on the commission. The Commission of Reclamation, which discusses hiring and firing conditions of work, pay, hours, rest, etc.

iods and prizes for productivity thus comprises a triad with the workers" indirect representatives outnumbered two to one, since the management is appointed and employed by the state.

Similarly, the so-called "Technical Advisory Councils in Cuban factories" have been ignored by the state administrators (of industry) and by the great part of the official union bureaucracy. So that even this timid attempt at democracy and worker control has not been made effective." (quoted from Report on Cuba, page 20, July 1961, published by Cornucopia, a group active in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, USA). In the countryside the government has decided to implement new state farms rather than cooperatives; in the latter there was some limited degree of control by the farmers themselves, which seems to be a mortal sin to the "wise guys" who form the new ruling elite group in Cuba. If Cuba is a popular state, where are the political vehicles through which the people exercise their control?

There is neither a lower nor a higher form of democracy in Cuba, but just another repetition of the old story of government by an elite which uses coercion, persuasions and propaganda to suit its own purposes. It is amazing to see how certain authors who have been very perceptive observers of the distribution of power in capitalist countries go to Cuba and forget to use precisely this powerful instrument of social analysis. Or is it perhaps that only capitalist societies are governed by a power elite? It is not very difficult to describe the main sections of the Cuban ruling elite at the present moment; it is the not atypical combination of declassé petty-bourgeois intellectuals and the leadership of the old PSP which itself is mostly composed of intellectuals with a few trade union bureaucrats like Laza





ro Pena and Blas Roca (Francisco Calderio). The First group in particular, had always shown great enthusiasm for any type of authoritarian regime which exercised its power in the name of the people. For instance, many of the present supporters of Castro warmly defended Peron's opportunistic regime even when it became very obvious that the latter was anything but a revolutionary regime.

The PSP was able to maintain a relatively clean record in some unions due to their efficiency in dealing with "bread-and-butter" issues during previous regimes. Of course, this relative efficiency was more than offset by their political opportunism, especially in the decade 1940-1950 when they supported reactionary politicians "in order to maintain national unity in the face of Fascist aggression and Trotskyite subversion." Nobody in Cuba forgets their treasonable support of Batista when the latter had already murdered anti-imperialist fighters like Antonio Guiteras and Sandalio Junco during his first era in power (1933-44). There is one thing in particular which is very common to both groups; that is their conception of how public power should be exercised: behind and upon the backs of the people, by manipulation of people's fears rather than by their active popular participation or their consent. An example of manipulation of people's fears is contained in the appeals of the Cuban radio stations, which can be easily heard in many parts of the USA, "to form 'Committees for the Defence of the Revolution' (read 'informers' committees') in every city block and in every other factory." The committee which might have a function in dealing with those negative characters like the remaining Batistianos who still move around in Cuba and who have no compunction in killing or maiming the innocent, nevertheless indicate a very dangerous feature in Cuban society. Membership of the committees is very small, rarely more than twelve per city block and their functions are described in a speech of Fidel Castro's reported in an article by Cesar Escalante in Cuba Socialista of September, 1961 (Vol. 1, p. 70): "Let us establish against the campaign of imperialism a system of collective revolutionary vigilance, in which everyone knows and everyone is, what each person who lives in the block does, what relations he had with the tyranny, to what he is dedicated, who he meets and what activities he follows." The same article stressed that the committees should be formed and directed solely by the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (see below). A consequence of this speech and Escalante's

article might be noted in a later speech of Castro's to the bank workers quoted in the Colombian newspaper El Tiempo on the 4th of October, 1961 (AFP). He is critically cited, in a sweeping attack on bureaucracy, "indiscreet censuses which are carrying out investigations of persons and families that do nothing but sow disruption and fear among Cubans."

One common argument used to defend Castroism is that whatever the regime has done wrong is merely the result and reaction to the pressure of American imperialism. Of course it would be naive to deny that this latter factor has contributed to a worsening of the situation, but it has been only a partial cause of all the suppression which has occurred. For instance, even before Eisenhower took the first important measure against Castro's Cuba -- the cut in the sugar quota -- freedom of the press and academic freedom, among other freedoms, had already been suppressed in Cuba. This was not done because there existed a "clear and present danger" to revolutionary institutions in Cuba, but it was just a coldblooded act on the part of Castro and his associates in the Communist controlled CNP (Newspapermen's Union) and in FEU (University Students' Federation). The bourgeoisie press, at the time of seizures, did not have more than a third of the newspaper circulation in Havana and not more than 10 per cent of the total circulation in small and middle class size provincial towns (May 1960). This was due to the fact that the Castro regime had at its disposal all the newspapers which had been previously owned by followers of Batista. The bourgeois press cultivated a rather timid style since it was also afraid of spontaneous popular sanctions. Since then, even those newspapers that had a position of "critical support" of the regime have been also suppressed, the latest case behind the Trotskyite newspaper Voz Proletaria (Proletarian Voice) which had a very small circulation. To this, we should add that all radio and television stations are also government controlled and that it is not possible to find anti-communist books such as THE NEW CLASS in any bookstore in the country, some thing which was possible some nine months ago.

It would be unfair to deny that sectors of the Cuban population have derived material benefits from the present government, especially the agricultural proletariat which although deprived of any political rights in the state farms, has in many instances improved its standard of living. The urban workers in the cities, and there are quite

a few of them in Cuba, have achieved lesser gains and in some instances have actually lost some of their rights acquired before Batista's regime. Corruption seems to be absent in the high government circles, but it is already common in the lower and middle levels of the bureaucratic apparatus. There has certainly been an improvement in rural health services. Unemployment in the cities remains a problem although there is evidence that it has slightly decreased in the interior of the island. The Literacy Campaign should of course be continued, although a change in the reading contents is indispensable so that all unscrupulous indoctrination may cease. It should also be admitted that the government has done much good in the fight against racial discrimination which, fortunately, was never very pronounced in Cuba. Any constructive revolutionary opposition to Castroism should acknowledge these gains and guarantee not only their permanence but also their advancement. To recognise them, however, should not imply at all that here we have just a question of balancing the "plusses" of economic gains against the "minusses" of political suppression. The false dichotomy of political and economic freedom, as being two different things, was a result of Nineteenth Century Liberalism which nowadays any socialist or intelligent liberal would reject right away. In the not very long run, economic gains under political absolutism do not mean much since economic life is also subjected to that absolutism.

The same happens, of course, when we have so-called political democracy under economic oppression (be it human slavery or wage slavery); it does not take very long for the concentrations of economic power to exert themselves in political life. Consequently, this false dichotomy is an extremely weak ground upon which to base a defence of Castro. Besides, the evils of the regime are not just unimportant things which have been done wrong here, and there, but are something infinitely more important: that is, the creation of a whole new society based on the values and ethics, or lack of them, of a totalitarian system which soon will express itself in a rigid class system as it has already happened in other societies which have previously gone through the same or similar political processes.

It is certain that Castro still enjoys the support of important sections of the Cuban population, though not as much support as his apologists usually claim. In that case, the duty of socialists in Cuba should be to increase the consciousness of those people who are still supporting the hiring and firing conditions of work, pay, and so on.

regime and show them there is a way out from the phony dilemma of either capitalist privilege and exploitation or totalitarian exploitation and privilege. Now, more than ever before, there is a great opportunity for the Cuban people to struggle for a truly progressive society since neither the USA nor the USSR are in a position any more to get away with whatever they want in the world.

Many well intentioned people acknowledge the totalitarianism of the Cuban government but still argue that since there are no present organized alternatives which would represent an advancement of the social revolution, then the Castro regime must be given "critical support". To begin with, this latter position can comfortably be taken outside Cuba, but not inside the country, since Castro himself has defined the situation as being one in which you are either for him or against him. Therefore, Castro himself, backed by all the Cuban state apparatus, rules out any such position of "critical support" inside Cuba. The fact that no organized socialist alternatives seem to exist at the present moment means that they should be created and encouraged whenever they appear, but in the meantime no support would be given to a totalitarian regime which is not progressive since it increases the alienation of Cuban society and denies progressive human values in its political regression. Outside "critical support" would objectively help Castro precisely in the task of suppressing all opposition including any positive political alternative which may originate in the country.

The Cuban regime has ceased to be fluid, and any hope of reforming the regime from within have been eliminated by

-----  
-----  
available from the YPSL and the SP-SDF:

The Case for Socialized Medicine; printed, 35¢  
The American Ultras; printed, a study of the right, 75¢  
Capitalism: A Study Guide; 25¢  
Crisis in the German Social Democracy; 15¢  
Communist China; 15¢  
Towards Peace )- resolutions of the YPSL  
Civil Rights: 1962 )- on peace and civil rights; free  
Helsinki and the YPSL; on the Youth Festival; free

the regime's actions in stamping out the least dissent or criticism which might arise spontaneously from below. It is quite naive to expect that an elite which has a complete monopoly of control will give it up of its own free will without the pressure of any opposition, and that Castro and his associates will suddenly acknowledge their mistakes and spontaneously give up any basic power. Consequently, the only progressive alternative left open is to expose the Cuban regime from a socialist standpoint completely unopposed from any of the present reactionary groups which are opposing Castro with imperialist support.

The culmination of the process of consolidation of bureaucratic collectivism in Cuba has been the creation of the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations as the basis of the single part of the state. The IRO's, which already exist at regional, municipal and state level, consist formally of a union of the PSP, the 26th of July movement, and the Revolutionary Directorate. Organizationally, these last two groups disintegrated in the first months of the revolution and have never re-formed since. This is just a repetition of what happened with the creation of the Association of Young Rebels, which is the organization that unified all Cuban youth organizations, into which the youth section of the PSP "dissolved" itself and, not surprisingly, is controlled. Some supporters of the regime point out the fact that there are some differences of opinion within the government party itself concerning such issues as whether art should be oriented towards "socialist realism" or whether more freedom should be given to the artists. While it is true that these differences of opinion do occur, all sectors of the present party and government in Cuba completely agree as to what the general content of Cuban society should be, though they may disagree in details. They are in complete agreement particularly in regard to this most important point that any popular control and decision making in Cuban society is out of the question entirely. It is very revealing that the discussions concerning the issue of "socialist realism" in art have been conducted within the ruling elite itself without any attempt on their part to find what other less fortunate Cubans may have to say about it, especially those artists who do not happen to be favoured in government circles.

It is also argued that the Cuban regime is not a mere satellite of the Soviet Union and that this in itself makes the regime "progressive". The first part of the statement

is true; the Castro regime is a relatively independent totalitarian government although not as independent as Tito's regime, for instance. But, certainly, that does not make Tito's regime or Castro's regime progressive since their basis of strength lies, as we have already seen, in the negation of progressive human values.

Finally, there is also the argument which says that since Cuba is an "under-developed country" the people there are not ready to rule themselves, and that it is the duty and privilege of the "wise guys" to rule the country by themselves. Even if it were true that these peoples are not ready for self-government, which it is not, then the only way to create democratic habits is precisely by introducing more self-government so the people may educate themselves by doing and not by merely contemplating the work of an elite. It is necessary to fight the creeping intellectual prejudice which assumes that academic learning confers a right of manipulation and disposal of those who have been too busy creating with their own labour those riches of society which precisely allow for the existence of a leisured intellectual elite. In addition to all this, it should be made clear that Cuba is one of the less underdeveloped countries among the "have-not" group of nations, with no more than 35 or 40 per cent illiteracy, 36 per cent of the population living in cities of more than 20000 inhabitants and 53 per cent living in towns of more than 5000 inhabitants, according to the last Cuban Census of Population (1953). Cuba also has the fourth largest per-capita income in Latin America, and this continent as a whole has a higher income than either Asia or Africa. There is no language or tribal problem in Cuba, such problems having traditionally been obstacles to self-government in other under-developed countries.

It is quite revealing that in this context many so-called progressive thinkers have come to use the same arguments put forth usually by the defenders of Imperialism and Colonialism. It is likely that Rudyard Kipling would have been very glad to write another poem eulogizing the "Elite's burden" instead of the already outmoded "white man's burden."

--Sergio Junco and Nick Howard

50x  
THE YOUNG PEOPLES SOCIALIST LEAGUE is a democratic socialist youth organization dedicated to building a society at the service of human needs. It believes that a great step for the realization of the potential of mankind can be made thru the social ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution. Consequently, it rejects all conceptions of minority social rule, such as capitalism or Communism, and believes that the voluntary, conscious participation of the people is the only way to the society it seeks. There are many different viewpoints within the YPSL, but this basic conception of democratic socialism is common to all of them and is the basis of YPSL membership. Here and now, the YPSL attempts to translate these principles into reality by actively engaging in all democratic movements of the people for peace, freedom and human dignity.

SERGIO JUNCO is the pseudonym of a Cuban socialist student now living in Europe. Nicholas Howard was an uninvited visitor to Cuba for five weeks in August and September 1961. As an informal delegate of the National Association of Labour Students' Organizations /British/ he worked his way to Havana and back relying on eight years' experience in the Merchant Navy. Their article is reprinted from the Winter, 1961 (#7) issue of International Socialism, 47 Fitzroy Road, London NW1, England

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE of the YPSL attempts to contribute to the political education of the members and friends of the YPSL. To this end it publishes material in general consonance with the aims of the organization, though in detailed points the material is quite likely to differ from the official viewpoint of the organization. Unless otherwise indicated the presentations do not reflect the official standpoint of the YPSL, only that of the author. Suggestions for further pamphlets are welcome.

YOUNG PEOPLES SOCIALIST LEAGUE, youth section,  
Socialist Party--Social Democratic Federation  
Room 402, 1182 Broadway; New York City; LE 2-9192

\_\_\_\_ I would like to join the YPSL (\_\_\_\_ the SP-SDF)  
\_\_\_\_ Please send me more information on democratic socialism.  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

5/1/62-1M